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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1337
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0683
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0948
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1208
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 1016
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 0678
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 0280
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000661

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL BA BILAT POL REFORM

SUBJECT: NDI REACHES AGREEMENT ON RESUMING PROGRAMMING IN
BAHRAIN

REF: MANAMA 450

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) NDI reached agreement July 12 with the Bahrain Institute for Political Development (BIPD) on a Statement of Principles that will allow NDI to resume programming in Bahrain more than a year after it was asked to close down its office in the Kingdom. The agreement calls for NDI and BIPD to enter into a six-month initial period of cooperation that will begin in October 2007. NDI and BIPD tentatively agreed on an initial program in October after Ramadan that will focus on constituency relations. The text of the Statement of Principles is in para 5.

¶2. (C) The agreement was signed during a July 11-12 visit to Bahrain of NDI country project director Scott Bates and regional program director Leigh Catherine Miles. The run-up to the visit was inauspicious as it featured a series of press reports in which BIPD Board of Directors President Lulwa Al-Awadhi appeared to lay down rather strict conditions under which NDI would be permitted to operate in Bahrain. However, after Al-Awadhi presented a rather rigid document for discussion at a July 11 meeting at BIPD headquarters, Bates proposed that instead the two sides draft a simple statement of basic principles on which their cooperation would be based. Al-Awadhi agreed, as long as the document contained a) a time period for cooperation, which could later be extended; b) mention of the program on which they would work jointly; and c) acknowledgment of respect for Bahrain's laws and sovereignty. Working together, Bates, Miles, Al-Awadhi, and BPD Executive Director Abdullah Al-Ashaal drafted the statement and agreed that they would move forward in the context of the principles.

¶3. (C) On July 12, Bates and Miles held positive meetings with representatives of the three largest parliamentary blocs to discuss NDI programming with the Council of Representatives (COR). COR first deputy speaker and Al-Asala (Salafi) president Ghanim Al-Buainain expressed support for the return of NDI and said that MPs will benefit from the type of programming Bates and Miles described. Al-Minbar (Muslim Brotherhood) spokesman and public services committee head Dr. Ali Ahmed, who recently returned from the legislative drafting institute conducted by Tulane University and whose trip was sponsored by NDI, welcomed the news that BIPD and NDI had signed an agreement, reportedly saying that the agreement clears the way for Al-Minbar MPs to participate

in NDI programs. Al-Wifaq members Jalal Fairooz and Dr. Jasim Hussain, the latter of whom also attended the legislative drafting institute with Ahmed, also welcomed the return of NDI and looked forward to benefits from NDI activities for them and their Al-Wifaq colleagues. Finally, Bates and Miles met with independent Sunni and Economic and Financial Affairs committee head Dr. Abdulaziz Abul, who was optimistic about NDI's return and anticipated that MPs will be eager to participate.

¶4. (C) Comment: The sharp press play in the run-up to the visit demonstrated how sensitive NDI still is in certain circles in Bahrain, and adds a cautionary note to the success of this visit. NDI detractors will be watching it closely, and Lulwa Al-Awadhi can be difficult to work with. That said, this visit marked a very welcomed step forward in our efforts to get NDI back in business in Bahrain, and we now do have agreement to resume programming. Furthermore, the support shown for NDI programming by the two Sunni Islamist societies, Al-Minbar and Al-Asala, is a most positive development. End Comment.

¶5. (C) Following is the text of the Statement of Principles signed by Lulwa Al-Awadhi and Scott Bates on July 12:

Statement of Principles
Bahrain Institute for Political Development and National Democratic Institute

One. The BIPD and NDI agree to enter into an initial period of cooperation for six months on issues of mutual interest. The initial period will commence in October 2007 with the implementation of an initiative conducted in partnership

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between the BIPD and NDI. During the initial period of cooperation either party may evaluate the relationship and make a determination regarding continued cooperation.

Two. The BIPD and NDI will agree to a joint work plan as the basis of their cooperation.

Three. NDI and its personnel affirm their respect for the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Bahrain and all the laws and regulations of the Kingdom.

Four. The BIPD and NDI affirm their mutual respect for and support of democratic principles of governance.

End text of statement.

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